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AUTHOR	Herron, David
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ABSTRACT

Pedagogical research and empirical studies show that student learning is encouraged by a number of general characteristics displayed by teachers (Ramsden, 1992). One of them is enthusiasm for the subject and for teaching it. User-education in research libraries is often highly repetitive and contact time with students is limited. So the question is: how does one maintain enthusiasm? At Karolinksa Institute Library (KIB), user-education is organized in such a way as to try to achieve this. For example, as many of the library staff as possible are involved in library teaching, library teachers are given the freedom to choose both the courses they teach as well as the methods they use to teach them. Library teachers are also encouraged to teach in pairs. Despite these features, it is evident that during periods of intensive teaching, even the most enthusiastic of the library teachers at KIB tire. Perhaps the approach postpones the onset of teaching fatigue. In this paper, KIB's management of pedagogical development is presented in further detail, from models to statistics. (Contains 11 references. (Author)

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Management of library pedagogical development: from models to statistics

David Herron
Karolinska Institute University Library
Stockholm, Sweden
E-Mail: david.herron@kib.ki.se

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Abstract

Pedagogical research and empirical studies show that student learning is encouraged by a number of general characteristics displayed by teachers (Ramsden, 1992). One of them is enthusiasm for the subject and for teaching it. User-education in research libraries is often highly repetitive and contact time with students is limited. So the question is - how does one maintain enthusiasm? At KIB, user-education is organised in such a way as to try to achieve this. For example, as many of the library staff as possible are involved in library teaching, library teachers are given the freedom to choose both the courses they teach as well as the methods they use to teach them. Library teachers are also encouraged teach in pairs. Despite these features, it is evident that during periods of intensive teaching even the most enthusiastic of the library teachers at KIB tire, but perhaps our approach postpones the onset of teaching fatigue. In this paper, KIBs management of pedagogical development will be presented in further detail - that is, from models to statistics.

Introduction

In 1998, I was employed as Pedagogical Developer at the Karolinska Institute Library (KIB); a large research library providing service to the Karolinska Institute (KI), medical university. My mission was made clear to me - stimulate pedagogical processes within the library because things had stagnated - but what was unclear, at the time, was exactly how I should do this. Four years later, I feel like we're getting

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there and we know where we're going. This paper will first present user-education and the go on to describe some features of pedagogical development at KIB.

Positive working climate

KIB has about 130 staff at two equally large sites (fall 2002) north and south of Stockholm. Under the leadership of the Library Director, Per Olsson, the library is characterised by team-orientation and openness. This positive working environment forms an important backdrop for pedagogical development.

User-education at KIB

Over the past 5 years, KIB has held, on average, about 330 teaching sessions (2,000 teaching hours) in medical information retrieval. These include graduate student courses (230 in the year 2001) which are approximately 3 hours long; postgraduate courses which currently run for 2 days but will be increasing to 6 days in the autumn. The number of courses held by KIB is steadily rising as the teaching staff at KI becomes increasingly aware of the importance of promoting the information literacy of students and it seems true to say that the university's teachers value and therefore ask after our courses. The library not only teaches students and postgraduates but also gives courses for teachers, researchers, health service professionals, medical librarians etc. User-education brings in about 1,1 million Swedish crowns per year (about 74,000 English pounds).

Organisation of user-education

As pedagogical developer, I have the overall responsibility for user-education. I am helped by several wonderfully enthusiastic co-ordinators who schedule user-education and mobilize library staff to teach. Since there is no formal user-education department at KIB, these co-ordinators and teachers not only teach, but also continue to work in customer service as well as being involved in project work.

3 stage model for user-education

Basically, one can say that we use a "3 stage model" for developing information literacy in graduate students. Stage 1, during the first term, is a basic introduction to the library. Stage 2, typically during the second term, deals with medical information retrieval from key databases and finally, stage 3, often related to essay writing, focuses on further databases and Internet resources.

Often user-education courses (especially, for graduates) are highly repetitive, and even the most enthusiastic of library teachers at KIB tire of teaching. The question we can ask is whether pedagogical development helps against teaching fatigue.

Pedagogical development at KIB

Generally, the library teachers are very positive about teaching. They talk about it, argue and are involved. I think there are a number of factors that contribute to this positive atmosphere. Here are some of them:

Vision for the development of library teachers

That every library teacher at KIB has the confidence and knowledge to change pedagogical approach and method as needed. This vision gives us something to strive for.

The existence and enthusiasm of the pedagogical developer

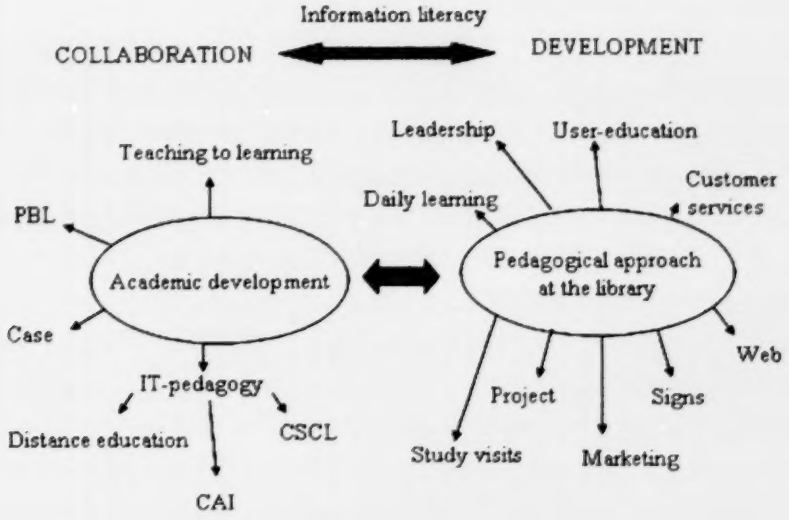
The fact that I exist signals to the staff that the management takes user-education very seriously. I am a continuously available resource. Like any good teacher, I am enthusiastic, committed and passionate about pedagogical development. I care about the people I work with and try to make teaching fun.

Pedagogical platform

KIB has a policy document for user-education in the form of a Pedagogical Platform. Since time does not allow me to describe in detail the full content of this Platform (Herron, 2001) it is sufficient to say that it deals with issues like - how you view learning, knowledge, teaching, user-education, information literacy and even pedagogical development. It is based on the belief that what one teaches and how one teaches is determined by how one views these issues (Fox, 1983; Ramsden, 1992; Kugel, 1993). Library teachers are encouraged to reflect about learning and teaching.

Pedagogical models

I think that developing mental models is important. Here is a model for pedagogical development at the library, partially inspired by Webb (1996).



The idea behind the right-hand side (Pedagogical Approach at the library) is that understanding of pedagogy (learning about learning/teaching) can help to stimulate development of library functions, typically user-education but also, for example, customer services. The idea behind the left-hand side (Academic development) is that an understanding of present-day pedagogical theory, concepts and ideas can be used to create new collaborations with teachers in the mother organisation, in our case, KI. The main focus is information literacy.

I often use this figure when discussing development of user-education with the library teachers. For example, we have recently set up a group within KIB, who are developing skills in teaching and providing service to distance students and this has definitely created new forms of collaboration with KI teachers.

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Goals for the development of user-education

There are clear goals for what we should develop each year in the area of user-education. I periodically remind library teachers of these goals! We usually achieve most of them (which is good to be able to say to the Boss!).

Library teachers choose the courses they teach

Library teachers are provided with the schedule from the co-ordinators for the forth-coming term's teaching. In the first instance, they can choose which type of session they want to teach. For example, a librarian might only want to teach nurses so she/he can learn something about the nurse's course and the subjects they study. In the second instance, individuals are asked if they can teach a particular session.

Teaching in pairs

The library teachers can also choose if they want to lead the teaching session or assist. The library teachers enjoy teaching pair-wise and point out the advantages: valuable to plan and discuss with a teaching partner (also a critical friend); chance for experienced library teachers and newcomers to work together; variation by teaching with different people; learn about different teaching styles etc. From my point of view, pair-wise teaching also means that teaching is no longer a private activity.

Positive support from the customer services manager

The general policy is that those who teach a lot work less in customer services when the teaching load is heavy. We try to make it easy to say "yes" to teaching even when teaching clashes with scheduled work in customer services since the customer services manager finds a replacement!

Active use of Pedagogical Resources

At KIB, all the staff has on-line access to teaching information and materials from a site on the library's Intranet: Pedagogical Resources. This allows teachers who are short of time to teach using the materials available. But we also encourage teachers who have more time to use these materials as inspiration for developing an individual teaching style. Library teachers also freely deposit their PowerPoint series at this site. Again, from my point of view, this encourages an open and generous atmosphere.

Pedagogical skills development opportunities

The library teachers have a number of opportunities for pedagogical skills development; internal workshops, access to pedagogical literature, attendance at external workshops and conferences etc. Being involved in a project to develop teaching, however, seems to work best. For example, we have recently adapted the method of WebbQuest (Dodge, 2001) to user-education:
(http://kib.ki.se/edu/ped_resurs/webbquest/sjukskoterskor/index.htm)
(Haglund and Ohlsson, 2000; Ohlsson et al. 2002).

Variation in students and expansion of teaching

The library teachers adapt their teaching of medical information retrieval to a number of different groups and this seems to provide variation. Recently, the focus of teaching has expanded to include: how to use a Learning Management System, how to use an electronic course evaluation, how to create user-friendly

web-sites and Word, Excel and PowerPoint as IT tools to support the presentation of science. I think this is a trend.

Quantity, quality and effect of user-education

In a statistical database, library teachers report on teaching: course length, preparation time, number of library teachers involved and number of students. From this information, it is possible to quantitatively define how much user-education we do, how many man-years are involved and approximately how much it costs. The library teachers are usually very interested in statistics, which also make user-education more widely visible. In the fall, we will start to ask students to fill in a short electronic evaluation and be able, in a similar way, to report on the quality of our teaching too. The next step - to assess the effect of our teaching - will require more time.

Making library teachers perceptions visible

It seems to me that much of pedagogical development is about creating a common language. It is about understanding differences in how we perceive pedagogical issues. Recently, a student interviewed ten of the librarian teachers at KIB and, through analysis of the interviews, she could pick out differences in perception (phenomenograpy) of user-education (Ström, 2002), partially inspired by (Bruce, 1997; Bruce, 2000). The three main perceptions were: 1) user-education is about learning to use the library; 2) user-education is about learning the search process; and 3) user-education is about helping students to learn their subject. Here, we have the means to understand differences in opinion about what and how we teach. I think that the library teachers will enjoy talking about this. And it will help further pedagogical development.

Partial cure for teaching fatigue?

Do library teachers get less tired because of pedagogical development? Well, there are lively pedagogical discussions in the corridor and, the other day, one of the library teachers told me that she really looked forward to teaching next term and how exciting it would be. But they still, at times, get tired of teaching as I think all teachers do.

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